

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 7282

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IS, PO
SUBJECT: PORTUGUESE AGRICULTURAL MINISTER VISITS ISRAEL

REF: PARIS 31089

1. PORTUGUESE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE ANTONIO LOPES CARDOSO VISITED ISRAEL OCTOBER 17-21. HE WAS THE FIRST PORTUGUESE MINISTER EVER TO VISIT ISRAEL. DURING HIS STAY HE HAD DISCUSSIONS WITH PRIME MINISTER RABIN, AGRICULTURAL MINISTER UZAN AND MFA DIRECTOR GENERAL AVINERI (IN THE ABSENCE OF FOREIGN MINISTER ALLON) AND TOURED A NUMBER OF AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTIONS. HIS VISIT WAS GIVEN EXTENSIVE PRESS COVERAGE AND FAVORABLE COMMENT.

2. IN HIS MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, LOPES CARDOSO TOLD RABIN THAT IT WAS THE INTENTION OF THE PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. A JOINT STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE TWO MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE MENTIONED THAT MINISTER UZAN HAS ACCEPTED AN INVITATION TO PAY A RETURN VISIT TO PORTUGAL. ISRAEL AGREED TO EXTEND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO PORTUGAL IN AGRICULTURE AND AN ISRAELI MISSION WILL VISIT PORTUGAL TO STUDY HOW THAT ASSISTANCE CAN BEST BE RENDERED.

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3. IN A DISCUSSION WITH THE MFA ACTING DIRECTOR FOR

EUROPEAN AFFAIRS (SAVIR) WE WERE TOLD THAT NOT MUCH PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE TOWARD THE FORMAL ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS DURING LOPES CARDOSO'S VISIT. THE ISRAELIS REMAIN CONVINCED, HOWEVER, THAT THE PORTUGUESE MEAN TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS AND THEY DO NOT INTEND TO PRESS FOR A SPECIFIC TIMETABLE. SAVIR SAID THAT ON BALANCE THE VISIT WAS REGARDED AS A POSITIVE STEP BECAUSE IT WAS DESIGNATED AN OFFICIAL VISIT AND BECAUSE LOPES CARDOSO EMPHASIZED PUBLICLY THAT IT WAS A PART OF THE PROCESS OF NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS. OTHER VISITS WHICH ARE PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE INCLUDE THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, PORTUGUESE JOURNALISTS AND THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. NO DATE HAS YET BEEN SET FOR UZAN'S RETURN VISIT ALTHOUGH THE SURVEY MISSION FOR THE ISRAELI TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM - HEADED BY AGRICULTURE MINISTRY DIRECTOR GENERAL EILAND - WILL VISIT PORTUGAL IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

4. IN THEIR CONVERSATIONS THE PORTUGUESE HAVE DENIED ARAB PRESSURES AGAINST NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL.

THEY REFER TO THE NEED FOR INTERNAL STABILIZATION BEFORE PROCEEDING WITH WENING NEW DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS AS THE REASON FOR PROCEEDING SLOWLY. SAVIR SAID THAT IN THEIR DISCUSSIONS THE PORTUGUESE AND THE ISRAELIS HAVE DISCUSSED THE PLO AND HAVE EXCHANGED VIEWS ON HOW BEST TO HANDLE THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION BUT THESE EXCHANGES HAVE BEEN STRAIGHTFORWARD AND NOT IDEOLOGICAL. TOON

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